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RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
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RUCPDC/NOAA NMFS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAEPA/EPA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 000533

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR OES/PCI, OES/ENV, OES/SAT, OES/EGC, AND SCA/INS
STATE FOR STAS
DOE FOR INTERNATIONAL
INTERIOR FOR FWS RILEY
STATE PASS TO NSF FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

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SUBJECT: NEW DELHI WEEKLY EST OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE WEEK OF
MARCH 16 TO MARCH 20, 2009

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11. (U) Below is a compilation of Environment, Science, and
Technology highlights from Embassy New Delhi for the week of March
16 - 20, 2009, including the following:

- Haryana State Forest Department Goes After High Profile
Development and Mining Interests
- Forest Fires In National Parks Cause Concern for Endangered
Species
- Global Warming Affects the Worlds Highest Battlefield
- State Forest Departments Excused From Election Duty
- New Swiss Consulate in Bangalore to Include Science Section
- Increasing India/Russia Science Collaboration
- Indian Space Research Organization Discovers New Bacteria
- IIT Kharagpur Develops Inexpensive Artificial Heart
- Hydrogen Vehicles Planned for Delhi

ENVIRONMENT

Haryana State Forest Department Goes After High Profile Development
and Mining Interests

12. (U) The Haryana Department of Environment and Forests (DEF) has
constituted flying squads to check on serious violations of the
Forest Conservation Act by developers and the mining lobby in an
eco-sensitive zone of the Aravalli mountain range near the Delhi
National Capital Region. Media reports indicate local politicians
and government agencies such as the Haryana Urban Development Agency
and the Haryana Tourism Department were complicit in illegal
construction projects in the protected zone. Under current law,
construction and mining are illegal in only a section of the
Aravalli range although the Committee that advises the Courts on
environmental issues has recommended the entire range, with certain
limited exceptions, be treated as a protected area.

Forest Fires In National Parks Cause Concern for Endangered Species

13. (U) Barely a month after a blaze devoured one-fifth of the
Keibul Lamjao National Park in Manipur, forest fires have been
reported in five more regions in Arunachal Pradesh. In addition,
forest fires have also been reported in the Tadoba and Melghat Tiger
Reserves in Maharashtra. Forest officials state the fires may have

had a serious impact on endangered species however no deaths have been confirmed. The causes of the fires have yet to be ascertained.

Global Warming Affects the Worlds Highest Battlefield

14. (U) Dr. Rajeev Upadhyay, from the Kamaun University in Nainital in Uttarakhand, published in Current Science last week his findings that the Siachen Glacier, situated at an elevation of 19,000 feet, was originally as long as 150 km at the beginning of the inter-glacier period. The glacier is currently 74 km in length and the World Wildlife Fund estimates it, along with other Himalayan glaciers, are shrinking at the rate of 33 to 49 feet per year. Dr. Upadhyay has studied the glacier since 1995, and believes the melting process will have an impact on the Indus river water flow which is fed by waters from the Nubra and Shyok rivers that originate from the Siachen glacier. These rivers account for much of Pakistan's irrigation requirements. The Siachen glacier is an active conflict zone among Indian and Pakistani armed forces. Dr. Upadhyay dismissed the view that military activity in the region is the primary cause of glacier shrinkage attributing the ice loss to global warming. However, Dr. Syed Iqbal Hasnain, a glaciologist and Senior Fellow at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), told ESToffs the negative impact of human activity on the glacier cannot be discounted and has been a factor in the glacier's melting.

State Forest Departments Excused From Election Duty

15. (U) The Election Commission of India sent letters to the Chief Secretaries and Chief Electoral Officers of all States and Union Territories to exempt vehicles and staff of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries from election duties in the April - May 2009 elections. Any attempt to draft forest department vehicles or staff for election duty is to be reported to the Election Commission of India.

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SCIENCE

New Swiss Consulate in Bangalore to Include Science Section

16. (SBU) The Swiss Science Counselor relayed to ESToff that Switzerland was awaiting final MEA approval to open a new consulate in Bangalore, though he did not specify an expected opening date. The officer slated to lead science and education issues has already arrived in Delhi and expects to move to Bangalore in July. She indicated Bangalore was chosen by the Swiss Government in order to better connect with India's science community.

Increasing India/Russia Science Collaboration

17. (U) Press reports India and Russia expect to define an S&T collaboration roadmap during their September 2009 meeting, with a focus on areas such as renewable energy, health care, chemical research, nanotechnology, biomedical instrumentation, and hydrates for energy related applications. They plan to set up a joint technology clearing house to bring together R&D labs and industries from both countries and accelerate the commercialization of the in-house developed technologies. India and Russia recently concluded a conference on space research and, according to newspaper reports, plan to launch a radio telescope with a 10 meter antenna which will include Indian radiation receivers, launch an ultra violet telescope, and cooperate on the Chandrayaan II mission. Russia also plans to provide training to Indian personnel before India's 2020-2025 manned moon mission by launching a space mission with an all Indian crew in 2015.

Indian Space Research Organization Discovers New Bacteria

18. (U) ISRO reported discovering three new species of ultraviolet radiation-resistant bacteria in the upper stratosphere. The bacteria have been named Janibacter hoylei (PVAS-1), Bacillus isronensis (B3 W22), and Bacillus aryabhata (B8 W22). Samples were

verified by the Center for Cellular and Molecular Biology in Hyderabad and the National Center for Cell Science, Pune. The discovery was part of an ISRO-sponsored three year study carried out by a multi-institutional team. In its next experiments, ISRO plans to examine how bacteria can exist at such altitudes and their possible origins.

TECHNOLOGY

IIT Kharagpur Develops Inexpensive Artificial Heart

¶9. (U) A research team lead by Prof Sujoy Guha of the School of Medical Science and Technology at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur successfully tested a 13 chamber artificial heart on small animals, and is currently testing it on goats. The team has applied for human clinical trials and plans to work with doctors from Kolkata Medical College Hospital and the All Indian Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi. The heart, a first of its kind in India, is expected to cost about USD 200.

Hydrogen Vehicles Planned for Delhi

¶10. The United Nations has funded a USD 1 million public private partnership project to develop hydrogen-fueled three wheel autorickshaws in India. Prof. L. M. Das of IIT Delhi heads the project, which includes participation by the Mahindra Group which will build the vehicle and the Air Products Corporation which will provide fueling services. As a demonstration, 15 autorickshaws will run between the Delhi Metro station located at Pragati Maidan and the Pragati Maidan exhibition complex starting in 2010. In related news, the GOI plans to use hydrogen-fueled buses, developed by ISRO and the Tata Group, during the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi.

WHITE